



Healthier

WINTER 2010

VETERANS' NEWS



Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki and his wife Patty Shinseki assist with Winterhaven Homeless Stand Down. Jose Riojas, Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security and Preparedness distributes clothing to a Veteran.

DCVAMC RECEIVES CAREY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Washington DC VA Medical Center (DCVAMC) was honored with the VA's Robert W. Carey Performance Award (Achievement Level) for implementing management practices that result in a high level of service to Veterans. The Carey Award was named in memory of Robert W. Carey, a recognized VA quality leader and champion for excellence in the federal government. It is among the most prestigious awards VA bestows.

The DCVAMC is the most visible facility in the VA system, located as it is in the heart of our nation's capital city. Known as the "Flagship of VA Health Care" for its consistently outstanding results in health care delivery, DCVAMC outcomes in health care performance measures regularly exceed those of the private sector. Additionally, DCVAMC is well-known for its creative and innovative applications of medical technology, in particular in its use of VA's highly regarded electronic health record system.



VA Deputy Secretary W. Scott Gould (left) presents the 2009 Carey Award (Achievement Level) to Medical Center Director Fernando Rivera.

THERAPEUTIC HORSEBACK RIDING: GETTING A LEG UP ON RECOVERY

Polytrauma Veterans are taking to the trails, riding horses as part of their rehabilitation. The Washington DC VA Medical Center's Recreation Therapy Service has offered therapeutic horseback riding since 2008 to help improve the quality of life for Veterans suffering from a variety of physical and mental health conditions. Currently, combat Veterans are riding at Fort Myer in Virginia and at Fort George G. Meade in Maryland. Therapeutic horseback riding, also known as "equine assistive therapy," is beneficial on many levels says Recreational Therapist, Lucile Lisle, "riding gives patients a sense of well-being and independence while strengthening the muscles and improving balance and circulation." DCVAMC offers Veterans a variety of alternative therapies, including yoga, acupuncture, hydro-therapy, massage, pet therapy and creative arts.



Jason Torres, DCVAMC patient, receives equine assistive therapy as part of the Ft. Myer Caisson Platoon Therapeutic Riding Program.

PET THERAPY

Meet the Medical Center's youngest, smallest and arguably cutest, volunteer - Gilbert, the mental health therapy puppy. Gilbert, a Maltipoo, comes to the Medical Center almost every day and attends group therapy sessions. Pet therapy is known to have many benefits, including improved socialization, mental stimulation, enhanced feelings of acceptance and development of a more outward focus. Gilbert's owner, Tiffany Thomas, a mental health technician with the Health Improvement Program, says Veterans have been very receptive to Gilbert and enjoy petting and holding him. "He makes Veterans smile," Thomas said.



Veterans (left to right) Vincent Wigfall, Patricia Watson, Anthony Proctor and Arcelio Newell enjoy a moment with Gilbert, the therapy puppy.

VA TELEHEALTH BRINGS CLINICAL TEAM TO BEDSIDE

Over 400 Veterans currently participate in the Washington DC VA Medical Center's Care Coordination Home Telehealth program, giving them direct connections to their health care providers through the use of Telehealth devices installed in their homes. Many units are used by Veterans to enter information such as blood pressure, weight, and results of home glucose tests. These devices electronically transmit vital data to the care team. Some patients use a video phone to communicate with their care providers. These systems are especially useful to people with mobility issues that restrict travel and those with chronic conditions that require regular monitoring.



The two-way video health unit allows physicians and nurses to monitor the health of Iraqi War Veteran, Jay Briseno, Jr.

From his bedside in suburban Northern Virginia, Iraqi War Veteran, Joseph "Jay" Briseno, Jr., can get a comprehensive examination from his team of clinical specialists. His new Telehealth unit uses a broadband camera and video conferencing technology allowing his VA care team to keep tabs on everything from the condition of his skin to the settings on his ventilator. Telehealth, remote health care technology, is an important lifeline for Jay and his family, providing a real-time link to his health care team some 30 miles away at the VA Medical Center.

Similar units are now available at DCVAMC Community Based Clinics to provide specialty services such as dermatology, mental health therapy and ophthalmology closer to home. To learn more, call the CBOC nearest your home. A complete list of CBOCs and their phone numbers is located on this magazine's back cover.

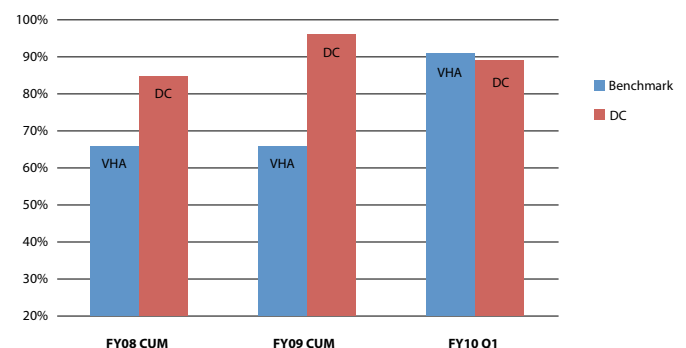
Quality Corner

MOVE!

DCVAMC is meeting and achieving our goal for screening overweight Veterans to lower the rise of obesity and its complications. Patient who lose weight reduce their risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, cancer, sleep apnea and gallstones. If you are overweight and are interested in a program that provides guidance on nutrition and physical activity, and is tailored to fit your individual needs, talk to your Primary Care Provider about joining the MOVE! Program.



Managing Overweight/Obese Veterans Everywhere (MOVE!)



LARGE TURNOUT FOR VA MEDICAL CENTER'S 16TH ANNUAL HOMELESS EVENT VA SECRETARY ERIC K. SHINSEKI AMONG THE VOLUNTEERS



On Saturday, January 23, 2010, DCVAMC held a major event providing services to area homeless Veterans. The Winterhaven Homeless Veterans Stand Down offered medical screenings, mental health consultations, employment support and housing services to 411 Veteran participants – a 25% increase over the previous year.

“We owe so much to our Veterans, and it is important that we reach out to those less fortunate who, for a variety of reasons, find themselves homeless. We want to make sure they receive the care and attention they need and have earned.” said Fernando O. Rivera, Medical Center Director.

The event was sponsored by the VA Medical Center with the support of 72 Veterans Service Organizations (VSO), community groups and business leaders.

Medical screenings included flu shots, cholesterol, Hepatitis C, HIV, prostate and general physical exams. Consultative services offered included ophthalmology, podiatry, infectious diseases, oral health and women’s health. Psycho-social referrals for Veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and substance abuse were also offered.

Thirty female Veterans and 8 OEF/OIF Veterans took advantage of the opportunity to access care and services. The hospital’s Women’s Health Clinic team provided specialty care to the women Veterans and the OEF/OIF Case Management team with the assistance of Virginia Wounded Warriors provided support to the returning combat Veterans.



A volunteer explains how to use the Google Voice's lifetime free phone number.

The hospital transported 111 Veterans from local shelters to the Stand Down. VA Chaplain Service offered pastoral care and counseling, and Alcoholic Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous meetings were held. Veterans attending received hot meals, warm clothing, comfort kits, haircuts, and tokens for goods at local thrift stores – all in a supportive, non-threatening environment.

A highlight of this year's event was a "Lease-up" station supported by DCVAMC, Housing and Urban Development, and the DC Department of Housing. At this station, Veterans with vouchers and those in the process of receiving vouchers could get on-the-spot placement in available rental units.

For the first time, Google Voice joined the event's growing list of sponsors, donating a dedicated lifetime phone number card to over 250 Veterans at the event and providing additional cards for distribution to Veterans by the Health Care for Homeless Veterans outreach staff. These cards give Veterans voice mail service at no charge.

"This event underscores my commitment to end homelessness for Veterans in the Nation's Capital," declared Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. Shinseki and his wife, Patty Shinseki, joined over 500 Winterhaven volunteers – many VA employees – who devoted the day to helping Veterans in need.

FLAGSHIP SERVICE UNINTERRUPTED BY THE "SNOWMAGGEDON" OF 2010



When two back-to-back, record-breaking snowfalls nearly brought the Nation's Capital to a halt in February, DCVAMC continued its mission providing care to Veterans. Throughout the entire snow emergency, the Medical Center remained open, serving Veterans with a dedicated staff who sheltered in place or managed to get to the facility despite unplowed roads and blinding blizzard conditions. Community Based Clinics were intermittently closed and when that was necessary, each and every patient with an appointment was personally called.

Prior to the first storm's arrival on February 5, the Medical Center activated its emergency plan, including the Nursing Command Center and prepared for the worst. Staff of the Flagship had already been tested with a 20 inch storm on December 19. Extra food and medical supplies were at the ready, as were inflatable mattresses, cots, and plenty of clean linens. Police Service and our 4-wheel drive volunteer brigade stood by to get doctors, nurses, and essential personnel to the Medical Center. Facilities Management Service (FMS) and Engineering



6

1. Sheltered in place staff get cocoa and cookies delivered and served by the Executive Leadership Team.

2: Chief Nurse Executive, Geri Feaster, helped serve pizza to the many employees who worked through the snowstorms.

3: Service with a smile: Associate Medical Center Director, Mike Dunfee, coordinates storm emergency efforts and mops up, too!

4. George Ellenberger of FMS clears snow from the loading dock.

5: (Left to right) Dr. Natalie Branagan, Dr. Joanna Rosen and Monica Irmeler, RN braved the elements to support the Medical Center and Capital area Veterans.

6: Employees enjoyed three square meals, lots of snacks, and camaraderie in the Canteen.

7: Snow covered Flagship campus.

8: Using his own four-wheel drive car, Vietnam Veteran William Marlin volunteered to drive employees to work and patients to the Medical Center during the snow storms. The 4x4 brigade includes: Robert Williamson, Robert Green, James Johnson, Edward Zipeto, Robert Reynolds and Nathaniel Queen. The Flagship Team is exceedingly grateful to these urban cowboys who provided the VA Medical Center an invaluable service.



7



8

inspected the generators, heating system, snow plows and pipes. FMS and Engineering teams worked day and night to clear snow from parking lots and walkways. Staff of Nutrition and Food Service and Canteen Service labored side-by-side to feed nearly 300 employees who slept at the hospital during the height of the storm.

Good cheer and team spirit were evident throughout the challenging week, as people job-shared and assisted outside of their own departments. For example, social

workers pitched-in answering telephones in the Patient Service Center. Administrators delivered cocoa and cookies to nursing units. Employees carpooled together and many generously helped co-workers shovel out their cars. Everyone demonstrated care, concern and support for Flagship team members and for the Veterans we serve.

PATIENT FIRST PARKING



The Medical Center has several major construction projects underway to expand our services to Veterans. While we're under construction, we are working hard to ensure that our "growing pains" don't impact your experience at the Flagship in any way.

For your greater convenience, we have expanded patient parking by nearly 200 spaces. As always, Veterans with VA identification cards can take advantage of our free valet parking service. And, if you prefer to take Metro, we offer free shuttle service from the Columbia Heights (Green Line) Station and the Brookland/Catholic University (Red Line) Station.

When you visit us next time, you will see that construction has begun on our 20 bedroom Fisher House. This luxury home-away-from-home for families of Veterans undergoing long-term treatment will take approximately 12 months to complete. We have many major construction projects in the planning stages including a new 4-story administration building, a new 77-bed Domiciliary, a three-story parking garage, a larger Women Veterans Health Clinic, an entirely upgraded, larger outpatient pharmacy and an expansion of our Research Service building.

For more information and a map of the parking areas, visit our website at www.washingtondc.va.gov.

NEW PATIENT ORIENTATION PROGRAM

In an effort to help Veterans become more informed about the services available at the DCVAMC, the Medical Center has instituted a New Patient Orientation Program. The orientation program will provide Veterans with helpful guidance on a variety of topics, such as eligibility, Veteran benefits, Veterans Service Organizations, Women's Health, Primary Care, Mental Health programs, Pharmacy services and the Returning Combat Veterans Program. If you are interested in attending this program, please contact Jonathan Wilson at 202-412-1348 or send an email to: wasvamc.newenrollee@va.gov.

MEDICAL CENTER GREETERS: THE FLAGSHIP'S EYES AND EARS

When you enter the VA Medical Center's main entrance, the first thing you may notice is a friendly greeter in a navy blue or red blazer at the front greeter station. Greeters are available Monday to Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. to provide a variety of services - everything from directions, a tip on the best food in the canteen, escort assistance to your next appointment or hailing a taxi.



Greeters (left to right) Tim Proctor, Angelo Degree (seated), Jon Wilson and Keon Anderson serve as ambassadors helping Veterans and visitors of the Medical Center.

Greeters serve as Medical Center ambassadors, and although they use the front desk as their main station, you'll see them working throughout the hospital and its grounds. You may see them bringing a wheelchair to a patient in the parking lot, giving directions to a Veteran, or assisting in hailing a cab.

"We spend most of the day scanning the area on the lookout for Veterans or their family members who need help," said Jon Wilson, Head Greeter.

Greeters are essentially the eyes and ears of the "Flagship of VA Health Care." Helping you, the Veteran, in navigating this large hospital facility. They will be a great resource for you as construction projects temporarily change parking locations and access points to certain areas of the Medical Center.

Greeters are often the first to hear Veterans' issues and bring them to the attention of hospital leadership. Greeters are usually the first and last persons a patient sees during their hospital stay.

According to Assistant Medical Center Director, Paula Gorman, "We started the greeter program because we saw a need for a visible liaison between Veterans and the Medical Center. Veterans know they can go to the front desk and speak to a caring person, someone who can lend a helping hand or answer their questions."

The staff includes four full-time employees, three volunteers, and two Veterans participating in the Compensated Work Therapy Program (CWT). They work with the Patient Advocate Office monitoring all the outpatient clinics, labs, and common areas to ensure a safe and helpful environment for Veterans.

To wear the navy blue or red jacket, a successful greeter needs a few specialized skills such as a sharp mind to learn most everything about the facility, good eyesight to spot someone needing assistance, and the compassionate soul of one who truly cares about helping Veterans.

GOING GREEN IN THE CANTEEN

Recycling is an important way to save resources and keep our planet clean and green. Throughout the VA system, hospital facilities are looking for ways to recycle. At DCVAMC, we recycle all of our paper products and soon will be recycling plastic bottles and cans. The Canteen and Retail Store are joining in by using bags and paper cups made of recycled products. In addition, a large 34 oz. insulated travel mug is available in our retail store. This mug, made from all recycled products, sells for just \$3.79 and, as an added bonus, coffee refills using this mug are just 99 cents! Check it out next time you visit.



VA WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR SAFE MEDICATION PRACTICES



Pharmacy technicians like Nikia Tucker (left) and Wendy Qiu play a vital role in safely delivering medications to patients. The Department of Veterans Affairs was recently honored for its excellence in preventing medication errors.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has won top national honors from the independent Institute for Safe Medication Practices for its excellence in preventing medication errors.

“As one of the first health care organizations to develop and test bar code technology for medication administration, VA takes pride in its safety standards,” Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said. “This honor confirms that the department is delivering excellence in health care to our nation’s Veterans.”

Called the “Cheers Awards,” it honors individuals, organizations, companies and government agencies that set a high standard for keeping patients safe and improving the process of using medication.

For more than a decade, VA’s health care system has given hospital patients a bar code wristband. The bar code contains the patient’s unique identifier information. Nurses scan the wristband and the patient’s electronic health record displays the patient’s medical information. Then the nurse scans a corresponding code on a drug package before giving the medication to the patient. This ensures the right medications go to hospital patients at the right time, in the right dose.

What began as a stroke of genius on the part of a VA nurse watching a rental-car employee scan a bar code has become a widely used means of reducing medication errors in public and private hospitals. This year marks VA’s milestone of 10 years scanning bar codes on patient wristbands and drug packages to ensure safe and effective treatment.

“Administering medications with verification from bar-coding technology has proven to be a major step to ensure the safety of our hospitalized patients,” Shinseki said. “It’s one example of VA’s leading edge in electronic medical records.”

VA’s bar code program has received similar recognition from the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society and the American Society of Health Systems Pharmacists, as well as a Federal Technology Leadership Award.

In August 1999, VA first deployed bar code software throughout its medical centers to detect potential errors at the point where medications are given to patients. Since then, VA has administered more than 1.3 billion doses of medication through this automated system.

REACHING OUT TO CAPITAL AREA VETERANS

HEALTH CARE FOR HEROES



Compassionate Care.
Quality Care.
Veteran-centered Care.



www.washingtondc.va.gov

Get to know your VA Medical Center. Call the Patient Service Center at 202-745-8577.

Help us reach other Veterans who would benefit from our services but have yet to enroll. To begin the process, Veterans may complete the application online located on our website: www.washingtondc.va.gov.

DC AREA LOSES COLORFUL WWII VETERAN



Blackwell J. Hawthorne (Blackie), the charismatic Veteran known for his charm, good humor, energy, fierce loyalty and a southern accent so strong it prevented him from becoming a radio operator in WWII, died from a lingering illness at the age of 87.

Blackie Hawthorne was a longtime patient and friend of staff and volunteers at the Washington DC

VA Medical Center and he will be missed by this adopted family.

During WWII, Hawthorne became a gunner on the B-24 for the U.S. bomber fleet which played a critical role in winning the war in Europe. When his plane was shot down, he

survived only because he had grabbed a parachute on a whim before leaving the base. (Gunners generally were not issued parachutes.) After parachuting safely but in the middle of enemy territory, he was captured and spent the next two years in a German prison camp.

Liberated by the Russians, Hawthorne, like many young men of the day, took advantage of the GI Bill and attended college. There he met his wife of 56 years, Elizabeth. They had a very full life raising six children.

Hawthorne worked for various local publications including: the Alexandria Connection and the Fairfax Journal before, in his mid-seventies, he became Director of Advertising for the Falls Church News-Press. During his 10 years on the job, he inspired many of the paper's student reporters. He was a beloved local celebrity in Northern Virginia and was a fixture at Chamber of Commerce events. Blackie will be missed by his DCVAMC family.

VA MEDICAL CENTER RECOGNIZED AS LEADER IN DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS CARE

DCVAMC has been honored with the DVTeamCare Hospital Award for its efforts to prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT). This national award, presented by Eisai Inc. and the North American Thrombosis Forum (NATF) recognized the hospital's seven-step process for determining appropriate therapy to prevent DVT. Through the use of a templated guidance tool embedded in VA's electronic medical records system, providers at VA's Flagship hospital have developed a best practice for improved health outcomes.

DVT is a serious condition in which blood clots form in a vein deep within the body. If these clots travel they could cause life-threatening complications such as a stroke or pulmonary embolism. Patients who have recently had surgery or those confined to bed are at greater risk for developing DVT.

DVT blood clots can occur with little warning. You can take some preventative steps to help avoid DVT and its life-threatening risks. Manage and prevent DVT clots by maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Make certain your weight is within a healthy zone and stop smoking. Consider a moderate fitness program that keeps you moving – walking just 20 minutes a day will help. Avoid immobility for long periods of time. When seated for an extended trip in a car or on an airplane, take breaks occasionally and walk around.

In 2007, a DCVAMC Pharmacy employee sought to improve prevention of DVT practices in at-risk bedridden patients. Soon after DCVAMC applied and was selected for a one-on-one mentorship from the Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM) to develop a DVT prevention strategy.



Staff members from Informatics, Pharmacy and IRM worked closely with clinical staff to create an order set (Seven Steps to DVT care) that leads health care providers through an evidence-based risk-factor assessment. When patients are admitted or transferred, the order set prompts physicians to assess and analyze the patient's condition by guiding the physician through specific steps.

"Because of VA's outstanding Electronic Health Records System, the DVT order set can be used in VA medical centers across the country, offering a consistent quality of care to our Nation's Veterans," said Dr. Divya Shroff, DCVAMC Associate Chief of Staff, Informatics.

The DVTeamCare Hospital Award will be presented in April at the Annual Thrombosis Prevention Conference at Harvard Medical School.

WEDDING BLISS AT DCVAMC



When Marine Veteran Joseph Wilson told his Hospice and Palliative Care Case Manager Carol Minnich that his last wish was to marry his longtime sweetheart Denise Fraizer, he never dreamed his wish would come true. Minnich and Social Worker Kimberly Ford immediately went to work to plan a wedding and reception. Staff pitched-in with music, photography, food, programs and invitations. Chaplain Edgar Bankhead, also a Marine, performed the service Jan. 14 in the Medical Center Chapel to a standing room only crowd of family, friends and staff. News of the happy event flowed throughout the community as Fox 5 TV News covered the event. Mr. Wilson passed peacefully at the Flagship on Feb. 19.



50 Irving Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20422

VISITING HOURS AND POLICIES

Visiting hours are from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. every day, including holidays. Psychiatric visitation is 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekends and holidays. ICU Visitors should check-in with the nurse manager for ICU visiting policies. Children under six years of age are not permitted in patient or treatment areas. ALL VISITORS MUST CHECK IN WITH POLICE SERVICE TO RECEIVE A VISITOR'S PASS. PASSES MUST BE WORN AT ALL TIMES.

COMMUNITY BASED OUTPATIENT CLINICS (CBOC) AND OUTREACH (VET) CENTERS

Community Clinic-Alexandria703-313-0694
6940 South Kings Highway Suite #208, Alexandria, VA 22310

Community Clinic-Greenbelt301-345-2463
7525 Greenway Center Drive Suite T-4, Greenbelt, MD 20770

Community Clinic-Southeast202-745-8685
820 Chesapeake Street, S.E., Washington, DC 20032

Southern Maryland VA Outpatient Clinic301-884-7102
29431 Charlotte Hall Road, Charlotte Hall, MD 20622

Alexandria Vet Center703-360-8633
6940 South Kings Highway, Suite #204, Alexandria VA 22310

Silver Spring Vet Center301-589-1073
1015 Spring Street Suite 101, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Washington Vet Center202-726-5212
1250 Taylor St, NW, Washington, DC 20011

DCVAMC FREQUENTLY USED NUMBERS

Washington DCVAMC..... 202-745-8000
Emergency Room..... 202-745-8360
Suicide Hotline..... 1-800-273-Talk (8255)
Medical Advice Line..... 202-745-8247 (Your 24-hour, seven days a week link to expert medical advice)
Appointment Line..... 1-877-DCVAMC1 (328-2621) toll-free
OEF/OIF Help-Line..... 1-877-OIFOEF1 (1-877-643-6331)
Pharmacy Refill..... 202-745-4046
Pharmacy Questions..... 202-745-8235
Patient Advocate Office.... 202-745-8588

PATIENT SERVICE CENTER (PSC) HOURS:

Monday to Friday from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The PSC helps you manage your appointments. Call 1-877-DCVAMC1 (1-877-328-2621) or local 202-745-8577. It's a one-stop call for scheduling, changing and canceling appointments.



MANAGE YOUR HEALTH CARE FROM HOME

Next time you have an appointment at DCVAMC, be sure and stop by the My HealtheVet kiosk in the atrium lobby to quickly register for the My HealtheVet program.



Once registered, you'll immediately be able to manage your health care on-line in the comfort of your own home.

From the My HealtheVet website you will be able to:

- Manage appointments
- Refill prescriptions
- Check co-pay balances
- Review parts of your medical record and much more!

To enroll in My HealtheVet, call the Eligibility Office, 202-745-8000, ext.7982, or visit <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>



Visit the DCVAMC website: WWW.WASHINGTONDC.VA.GOV

View the latest on: health, veteran programs, activities and special events, jobs, volunteer opportunities, visitor information, benefits and much more!

You're the reason we're here, so let's hear from you!

Do you have a suggestion to help us improve our service? Would you like to send a compliment to a DCVAMC employee? Or, do you have a specific subject you'd like to see in Healthier Veterans' News?

Send your letters to Office of Public Affairs (003)

Washington, DC VA Medical Center

50 Irving Street N.W.

Washington, DC 20422